

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7438

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 2350

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, SU, ET
SUBJECT: SUDAN REPORTS ON WAR IN ERITREA

1. MILITARY ACTIVITY IN ERITREA HAS BEEN PROMINENTLY FEATURED IN KHARTOUM MEDIA DURING PAST WEEK WITH REPORTS DATED ERITREA OR KASSALA5 MAJOR STAGING TOWN FOR CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC. "HEAVY CLASHES" ARE REPORTED AT AD TACLAI WHERE ERITREAN FORCES HAVE GAINED POSITIONS INSIDE TOWN, CAPTURING MANY WEAPONS AND ETHIOPIAN "HOSTAGES." ETHIOPIAN ATTACK IS SAID TO BE DIRECTBU TOWARDS TIEWA (SIC), NORTHERN DANAKIL, SUPPORTED BY AIR, SE AND LAND FORCES. SECOND ETHIOPIAN ATTACK REPORTEDLY COMES FROM TOWN OF RAMA TOWARDS "ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT NO. 9 IN TIGRE."

2. ACCORDING SUAN, ETHIOPIAN NAVY HAS SHELLED COASTAL TOWN OF ADI WHICH IS 170 KILOMETERS WEST OF ASSAB. ETHIOPIAN WARPLANES HAVE MADE REGULAR AIR RAIDS ON BRUASLY (SIC) AND BIELOL ON RED SEA COST. AL AYAM MAY 23 SAID EIGHT SOVIET DESTROYERS WITH 5-INCH GUNS ARE STATIONED IN PORTS OF MASSAWA AND ASSAB TO BOLSTER DEFENCES THERE WHILE TWO MORE DESTROYERS PATROL RED SEA TO PROVIDE SECURITY. DEFENDERS OF MASSAWA AND ASSAB ARE WELL SUPPLIED WITH
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LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY WHICH IS MOSTLY OPERATED BY EXPATRIATES, ACCORDING PRESS. ALAYAM ALSO CLAIMED THAT MENGISTU ARRIVED IN MASSAWA ON MAY 22 TO CONDUCT TRIALS OF ETHIOPIAN COMMANDERS THERE WHO FAILED TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS DURING RECENT FIGHTING.

3. FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY OFFICIAL CONCERNED WITH AFRICAN

AFFAIRS SAID SUDANGOV BELIEVES ETHIOPIA IS NOW ENGAGED IN ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE SOME LIMITED MILITARY SUCCESS IN ERITREA. HE ADDED THAT LARGE OFFENSIVE WITH SOVIET OR CUBAN COMBAT SUPPORT HAS NOT YET STARTED ALTHOUGH PREPARATIONS ARE UNDERWAY. HIATUS IN SUDAN-ETHIOPIAN NEGOTIATIONS UNDER OAU MEDIATION AUSPICES IS DUE TO SUDANESE UNHAPPINESS OVER CURRENT ETHIOPIAN FIGHTING, ACCORDING THIS OFFICIAL.

4. JOINT STATEMENT OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY ON OCCASION OF ANNIVERSARY OF NIMEIRI'S REVOLUTION CONCLUDED WITH APPEAL TO "ETHIOPIAN BROTHERS" TO PUT END TO FIGHTING AND BLOODSHED AND TO SUBSTITUTE DIALOGUE FOR COLLISION AND CONSENT FOR KILLING. STATEMENT SAYS HISTORY HAS PROVEN IMPOSSIBILITY OF SUPPRESSING BY ARMS CAUSES SUCH AS ERITREA'S.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY GAZETTEER DOES NOT LIST TIEWA OR BRUASLY AND ADI IS OBVIOUSLY INCOMPLETE NAME. SUDAN APPEARS TO HAVE RELIABLE SOURCES IN ERITREA AND REPORTS ARE FAIRLY OBJECTIVE. NO CLAIMS OF MASSIVE OFFENSIVE OR OF VERIFIED CUBAN OR SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN COMBAT HAVE BEEN MADE. CONCERNING SUDAN-ETHIOPIAN RAPPROCHEMENT, SUDANGOV IS UNWILLING TO TALK WHILE FIGHTING CONTINUES EVEN FOR LIMITED OBJECTIVES.
BOGOSIAN

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